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**Inclusion of students with disabilities in new times: responding to the challenge**

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## Chapter 3

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### **Inclusion of Students with Disabilities in New Times: Responding to the Challenge**

Deslea Konza

#### **Introduction**

Australia began to integrate students with disabilities into mainstream classrooms in the mid 1970s after almost a century of educating students with disabilities in segregated settings. This was in response to both research findings about the relative effectiveness of special education settings, and a shift in attitudes in the Western world towards how people with disabilities should be educated, and indeed, live their lives.

A significant factor in the changing of attitudes was the principle of “normalisation” – the right of people with disabilities to learning and living environments as close to normal as possible – developed by Bank-Mikkelsen (1969) and Nirje (1970). Wolfensberger (1970) also wrote extensively on this subject, coining the term “social role valorisation” to highlight the right of all individuals to be valued equally, and to have the opportunity to contribute meaningfully to their communities.

Since the mid 1970s, the policy in Australia has been to integrate students with disabilities for part or all of the day in regular classrooms wherever possible, but specialised segregated facilities remained an option for children with severe disabilities. Students who were integrated often, but not always, had some level of curriculum modification and teacher aide support. Because some children required specialised adjustments, such as ramps, modified toilets, large print or Braille materials, students with similar disabilities were often transported to a school where such resources could be centralised. Therefore many students were not able to attend their neighbourhood school, although they may have been located in a more normalised environment.

Over the past two and a half decades, the notion of “inclusion” has pushed the debate regarding the education of students with disabilities further (Forlin 1997). Inclusion seeks to completely remove the distinction between special and regular education, and to provide an appropriate education for all students, despite their level of disability, in their local school. It involves a complete restructuring of the educational system so that all schools would have the responsibility of providing the facilities, resources, and an appropriate curriculum for all students irrespective of disability. It is a philosophical move away from the accommodation of students with special needs into a “normal” system, towards a full inclusion model where everyone is considered normal, and where the needs of all can be met. This trend is situated within a broad social justice agenda, which argues that equality for all must include

access for all students to their local school. This trend has been supported by United Nations policies which affirm the rights of children (the United Nations Convention on the rights of the Child, 1989; the United Nations Standard Rules for the Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (1993; the UNESCO Salamanca Statement, 1994).

Educational policies in developed countries have responded to the social justice agenda in different ways. In the United States, the rights of children with disabilities are enshrined in legislation (Education for all Handicapped Children Act; 1975; the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 1990). In Great Britain, the Warnock Report (1978) led directly to the Education Act (1981), and the subsequent amendment to the Education Act (1993) and Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (2001) established the rights of students with disabilities to be included in regular schools. In Australia, the Disability Discrimination Act (1992) and the Disability Standards for Education (2005) support the enrolment and full participation of students with disabilities in mainstream schools. All state educational policies state a philosophical acceptance of inclusion and support inclusion “where possible” and “when in the best interests of the child”.

### **Perceived benefits of an inclusion model**

Apart from the fact that the inclusion model is consistent with the notion of social justice that underpins the principle of normalisation, there are many other perceived benefits of this model. When students with disabilities are educated in the neighbourhood school, as opposed to a special class or school some distance away, they become part of their local community. Their school friends are more likely to live in their neighbourhood, weekend activities are more likely to occur with people they see every day at school, and they are more likely to meet up with people they know when out in their own community. Students with disabilities also have regular peers as models of behaviour, problem-solving and other cognitive skills in cooperative groupings. These normal interactions are less likely if the students are being transported to a school some distance away (Wills & Jackson 2000).

Inclusion provides opportunities for the development of appropriate attitudes towards people with a range of disabilities. Exposure to students of all types on a daily basis allows typical students to see that, just like themselves, students with disabilities have strengths and weakness, and good days and bad days (Westwood & Graham 2003). Research has long established that changing attitudes towards people with disabilities requires, both, information about these disabilities and experience with people with disabilities (Bandy & Boyer 1994; Carroll et al., 2003; Cook et al., 2000; Lombard et al., 1998; Trump & Hange 1996; Westwood & Graham 2003; Wishart & Manning 1996). Inclusion facilitates both of these requirements.

Some students with disabilities have significant strengths in particular subject areas. Local secondary schools allow access to specialist teachers, which many Special Units within mainstream schools do not have. While access is theoretically possible if Units are located within mainstream schools, it is often the case that the Support Teacher is viewed as the person who has responsibility for students with disabilities, and access to science laboratories and other specialised facilities is often done on an ad hoc basis, rather than as part of the regular timetable.

The inclusion model can also broaden the expertise of mainstream teachers. When teachers have to organise their teaching more carefully, or adjust lessons for a student with learning difficulties, other children in the class can also benefit (Carroll et al., 2003).

### **Challenges to the implementation of a full inclusion model**

Despite the perceived advantages of an inclusive model of education for students with disabilities, significant issues remain unresolved. This section of the chapter will examine a range of issues that still confront the successful implementation of a full inclusion model. These include widely varying attitudes of teachers and other members of the school community;

#### ***Changing socio-political climate***

Forlin (1997) argues that the increasing implementation of national standards in many countries, increased emphasis on examination results, increased bureaucratic demands on school administrators, and increasing litigation make “a commitment to inclusive education...very difficult” (pg166). Students who may not necessarily contribute to a profile of academic excellence are viewed as not making a contribution to the overall appeal of the school. While special schools present themselves as centres of excellence for their population of students, few mainstream schools are prepared to advertise that they accept students with significant special needs for fear that they be seen as a “dumping ground”. This is true even of schools that claim to offer high levels of pastoral care and an ethos that contributes to the overall development and potential of all students (Konza 2003). Being able to claim a high percentage of students in the upper bands of ability on state-wide assessments attracts more students than does a claim that the school welcomes and caters for all comers.

#### ***Teacher resistance to the notion of inclusion***

The practical implementation of inclusion places considerable pressure on individual teachers: those who are in the frontline of the inclusion process (Florien 1998). Since the early days of the implementation of integration, Australian research has consistently revealed that many teachers, while philosophically accepting the notion, are resistant to the inclusion of students with significant problems, particularly those with more severe intellectual disabilities, and emotional or behavioural disorders (Center, et al., 1985; Center & Ward 1987; Conway 1996; Conway 2002; Graham & Prock 1997; Ward

et al., 1994; Westwood & Graham 2003). The impact of students with severe emotional and behavioural disorders on classrooms is reflected in the fact that one third of beginning teachers in one study cited this as their reason for resignation (Ewing 2002). While preschool teachers are more positive, perhaps reflecting the optimism one can afford when students are young and possibilities seem endless, principals, resource teachers and psychologists are less optimistic, and classroom teachers, those who face the daily responsibilities of the student in the classroom, are least enthusiastic about the inclusion of students with more severe disabilities (Center & Ward 1989; Mansett & Semmel 1997; Ward et al., 1994).

Research in other countries has revealed similar patterns. Bowman (1986) surveyed teachers in 14 countries and found that, while students with medical and physical disabilities were welcomed into the classroom, teachers resisted the inclusion of students with more significant disabilities. Bowman also noted, however, that in those countries that had enabling legislation requiring integration, teacher attitudes were more favourable towards integration.

Thomas (1985) compared the attitudes of teachers in a British system with those in a US state, and found that the overwhelming majority reported negative attitudes towards the integration of students with disabilities. Studies over the next two decades in different countries consistently supported these findings (Bartak & Fry 2004; Bay & Bryan 1991; Berryman 1989; Coates 1989; Hastings & Oakford 2003; Home and Ricciardo 1988; Ivey & Reinke 2002; Jahnukainen & Korhonen 2003; Semmel et al., 1991; Vaughn et al., 1996; Welsh, 1996). Scruggs & Mastropieri, (1996) conducted a meta-analysis, which examined the attitudes of over 10,500 teachers, and found that two thirds were only prepared to integrate students who did not require significant additional skills or time. Many teachers felt that policy makers were not in touch with the realities of the classroom. Most favoured the continuation of a pull-out model, and continued to see special education support personnel as having the real responsibility for student with disabilities, even if they were enrolled in regular classes. Criswell (1993) reported that only 21% of teachers believed they were responsible for modifying curriculum for a student with special educational needs. A decade later, Jobling & Moni (2004) found that most of their sample of pre-service teachers believed that responsibility for the academic progress of students with disabilities would remain with special education personnel, and that the purpose of placing these students in mainstream classrooms was for socialisation purposes only. In many classrooms, a teacher's aide is the person who spends most time with the student with special needs, often being solely responsible for the implementation of the student's instructional program. Specialist teachers are often involved with the students on an itinerant basis. These factors increase the sense that the child is not the responsibility of the class teacher, and in these circumstances, it is very easy for the child to feel, and in fact to be, marginalised. Teachers' attitudes also affect the acceptance of students with disabilities by their peers

(Paris 2000), thus teacher commitment to inclusion can be seen as one of the most critical factors in the success or failure of inclusive programs.

### ***Teachers' perceived lack of competence***

Research in the field of integration and inclusion has identified some of the causes leading to the widespread resistance of teachers to the inclusion of students with significant disabilities. Center and Ward (1987) proposed early in the discourse surrounding integration that teachers' resistance reflected a lack of confidence in their own instructional methodologies, and in the quality and amount of support offered to them. This led to a reluctance to integrate any students who placed additional demands on them. Many teachers were trained in a period when mandatory special education units were not included in their pre-service training. They had not expected to teach students regarded as "special ed". They do not see themselves as having the skills to teach students with widely varying abilities, nor do they have the desire to do so. Policy changes however, have overtaken them, and they find themselves facing students with a wide range of disabilities, learning difficulties, and in some cases, extremely challenging behaviours. Those teachers who trained more recently are finding that pre-service courses were not enough to prepare them for the realities of teaching students with a wide range of abilities and behaviours. One-semester pre-service course can certainly raise awareness and introduce prospective teachers to strategies that expand a teacher's repertoire, but they rarely result in high levels of teacher confidence and expertise. Teachers report significant feelings of inadequacy in regard to teaching students with special educational needs (Carol et al., 2003; Gould & Vaughn 2000; Schumm & Vaughn 1992). Moreover, few teachers have adequate training in the management of challenging behaviours, and it is such behaviour that is a key causative factor in the failure of many inclusive programs (Carr et al., 1991; Chandler 2000; McMahon & McNamara 2000; Peck et al., 1998; Reichle et al., 1996; Stephenson et al., 1999).

### ***Inadequate pre-service training and professional development***

Both pre-service and inservice courses that address the skills and the attitudes of teachers towards students with disabilities are deemed insufficient by many teachers (Bartak and Fry 2004; Gary et al., 2002; Gould & Vaughn 2003; Jahnukainen & Korhonen 2003; Van Kraayenoord et al., 2000; Westwood & Graham 2003), although inservice was found in some cases to be more effective than pre-service training (Siegel & Jausovec 1994). There are significant information gaps between teaching practice and the stated policies of educational bodies (Eraclides 2001). Many teachers struggle with the tension between accommodating the special needs of some students and disadvantaging other students. Some teachers believed that making any accommodations was unfair on other students (Lavoie 1989). Many teachers express concerns about assessment procedures if the curriculum has been greatly modified, and how assessment of modified material can then be judged against external assessment procedures. Information regarding the practical impact on learning and behaviour of particular disabilities, the extent to which support staff should be responsible for students with disabilities, best

teaching practice and guidelines on permissible assessment variations have been identified as urgent needs of teachers involved in inclusive programs. These needs are greater for teachers at the secondary level (Cochran 1998; Romano & Chambliss 2000).

### ***Large class sizes***

Other research identified more specific causes. Vaughn et al. (1996), and Scruggs and Mastropieri (1996) reported teachers' dissatisfaction with large class sizes, despite the inclusion of students with significant additional needs. Segregated settings and special units offer vastly reduced class sizes in recognition of the increased demands of some students. Inclusive class sizes are often no smaller than other classes, and do not allow for the additional individualised attention some students need (Avrimidis et al., 2000; Westwood and Graham 2003)

### ***Insufficient curriculum resources and aide support***

Inadequate teacher aide time and curriculum support in the form of modified materials were highlighted by a number of researchers (Avrimidis et al., 2000; Westwood and Graham 2003). Teachers need greater access to differentiated resources. Teachers were not convinced of the benefits for either the regular students or those with disabilities due to their lack of appropriate teacher preparation and resourcing.

### ***Feelings of vulnerability***

Forlin and her colleagues (2001) found in their survey of pre-service teachers that many students felt extremely uncomfortable in their dealings with people with disabilities because it forced them to confront their own fears of being disabled. Forlin et al., also reported another survey in which 86% of teachers surveyed reported that they do not feel relaxed when interacting with people with a disability. It is not surprising then that they resist the integration of students with disabilities into their classrooms, as it promoted feelings of vulnerability and emotional discord.

### ***Impact of behavioural issues on wider school community***

Hastings and Oakford (2003) reported that teachers in their sample based their reluctance on the negative impact that students with behavioural and emotional problems had on the entire school community. A single student with a major behavioural problem can create significant havoc in a school. Struggling with extremes of behaviour is not an empowering experience for teachers, principals, or administrative personnel. Their belief is that the individual needs of some students are so great that they demand a specialised setting.

### ***Reduced teacher efficacy***

These beliefs are precisely what led to the initial development of a segregated system of education for students with disabilities. Cook et al. (2000) contend that teachers' responses to inclusion are consistent

with a theory of “instructional tolerance”. Students who do not reward teacher investment of time and effort do not attract the same level of concern and attachment as students who reward their teachers’ efforts by being successful. Students who reward additional teacher time and effort, such as those with only a mild level of disability, remain within the teachers’ “instructional tolerance”. Students who remain outside this sphere of tolerance are easy to reject.

Instructional tolerance is related to teacher efficacy, which is directly related to such outcomes as student achievement, and classroom management. When students fail, teachers do not experience the traditional reward that teaching affords: the reward of seeing a student do something he could not do before. Teacher’s perceptions of their own professional competence are eroded by the failure of some students to learn, and by continual challenging behaviours in the classroom. Teachers need to believe that they can have an impact on the learning of students with special needs (Margolis & McCabe 2003). Feeling accountable or being held accountable, for students’ lack of progress is personally distressing for teachers. Forlin (1997) contends that most teachers have high expectations of themselves, and that the poorly resourced inclusion of students with such a wide range of needs sets them up to fail. Under the integration model, some schools underwent significant modifications and housed specialised resources to meet the needs of students from a relatively large feeder area. This level of resource provision has not always followed the students into their local schools. There is a continuing sense that schools and teachers have been “asset-stripped” by policy makers who have mandated inclusion but not allowed resources from special education to follow the students into the mainstream. Inclusive education is expensive, but it appears to many teachers and principals that schools are now being asked to cater for the needs of students with specialised requirements, but without the appropriate level of resources.

### ***Time demands***

According to Schumm & Vaughn, (1992) most teachers want to help low-achieving students, but do not have the time to prepare special materials. Time was also the major challenge associated with inclusion according to research by Westwood and Graham (2003). Balancing the need for almost constant supervision, and the development of individualised programming and complex behaviour management plans with the needs of the whole class affected the willingness of teachers to include high demand students in their classrooms. Added to these are the time demands of collaborating with different professionals, from school-based special education staff, to itinerant support personnel, to representatives from outside agencies (Avrimides et al., 2000).



### ***Increased administrative demands***

The administrative demands that accompany a child with special educational needs are seen to be overwhelming (Folin 1997). The need for annual submissions for funding; the legal requirements of individualised education programs for some students; the burden of complex data collection required for procedures such as functional assessments (Axelrod 1987); and reports for other professionals such as child psychiatrists, counsellors, paediatricians, itinerant services or community-based personnel who may be involved, are further causes of anxiety and increase the reluctance of teachers to include students with special needs in their classrooms.

### ***Need for collaboration***

The number of specialists associated with the education of some students raises the questions of how proficient teachers are in collaborating with others. Teachers are renowned for having a preference for maintaining control over their own “kingdoms”. Having itinerant or other support people in their classrooms is a threatening prospect for some teachers (Chandler 2000). The need to spend time collaborating in program development is also viewed negatively – it is just another thing they have to fit into their crowded lives.

### ***Undiagnosed students***

A recent survey in Australia (Bartak & Fry 2004) found that many of the struggling students in mainstream classrooms have significant problems, but are not receiving any additional support. While approximately 12% of students need additional educational support, only 2-3% of students were receiving it. These are generally students with learning difficulties and behavioural issues, often both, who do not fit into a specific category, but are considered “borderline”. A lack of formal diagnosis results in a lack of funding support, although their problems in classrooms are very real. Bartak and Fry found that students without funded support were of most concern to teachers, because of the extra demands placed on them. The incidence of students with special educational needs falling between the cracks and remaining without support in mainstream classrooms is a consistent theme in the literature (Ashman and Elkins 2002; Gary et al., 2002; Westwood and Graham 2003). Moreover, Westwood and Graham’s survey revealed that the prevalence of these students is increasing.

### ***Parent concerns***

Another issue relates to the parents of the mainstreamed or neurotypical students. These parents are not always satisfied that their children are being offered the best education when teachers spend additional time and resources on students with special needs. This causes further tension in the school community, and can result in principals being reluctant to enrol students with disabilities.

These factors have increased the pressure and the anxiety associated with the inclusion of students with different educational needs in mainstream schools. The lack of appropriate resource provision, and acknowledgement of the extra demands some students place on teachers can result in increased teacher stress and burnout in a profession that already loses many days due to these factors.

### **Signs of hope**

It is clear, then, that at the individual teacher, school and system level, many challenges remain before any claim can be made that students with disabilities are successfully included in mainstream schools. There is, however, some evidence that it is within the capacity of teachers and schools to successfully include students with disabilities. There are students with significant disabilities who are experiencing not only social inclusion, but full and successful academic inclusion in mainstream settings. Research has established that under certain conditions, positive teacher attitudes can develop, and teachers can learn appropriate strategies that support students with a wide range of abilities. This section will expand on these signs of hope.

#### ***Teacher attitudes change with experience of inclusion***

Cook et al. (2000) found that the greater the experience of inclusion, the greater the concern teachers felt for students with special educational needs. This concern was then reflected in a greater willingness to persevere, and to persist in efforts to help those students learn. The actual experience of inclusion was more effective in developing an “attachment” to their students than was reduced class size, in-class support, or formal training in special education. The teachers’ greater persistence was rewarded by improvements in their students’ learning, and the positive cycle was perpetuated. Hellier (1988) found that teachers in six Scottish primary schools who were involved in the integration of students with severe learning difficulties developed very positive attitudes towards the inclusion process. They also believed that their own personal development had been advanced by the experience. This finding has been supported by Avramidis et al., (2000) and Forlin (2000).

One group of students that did not attract this greater level of concern and commitment was the group with behaviour disorders. While these students certainly demanded and received a great deal of teacher time, it was not instruction-related, and it was not rewarded by learning gains, and in fact affected teacher perceptions of their own personal competence. Thus amid some signs of hope for attitude change for most students with disabilities or learning difficulties, great challenges remain in changing teacher attitudes towards students with behaviour problems. This issue will be revisited later in the chapter.

### ***Teacher attitudes change with increasing competence***

The positive effect of experience with inclusive programs on teacher attitudes was also noted by Villa et al. (1996), who argued that the change in attitude and commitment to the process emerged as implementation progressed, and that it occurred as a result of the teachers' increasing mastery of the skills required to teach students with a wide range of abilities. LeRoy and Simpson (1996) also found that the perceived competence of teachers was positively correlated with more positive attitudes. Clough and Lindsay (1991) found a gradual development of positive attitudes over a period of some years, and contended that this was the result of the teachers' developing competence, and the fact that they had been relatively well-supported through the process.

In a sample of 81 primary and secondary teachers, Avrimidis et al. (2000) found that university-based professional development increased positive attitudes and teacher perceptions of their competence in meeting IEP requirements. Even these teachers, however, found that students with emotional and behavioural disorders remained the most challenging.

### ***Training can positively affect attitudes and competence***

Reber (1995) found that students who completed a practicum in an inclusive setting as part of a pre-service special education course articulated more positive attitudes towards inclusion than students who did not have this practical experience of inclusion as part of their course. LeRoy and Simpson (1996) also found that overwhelmingly, teachers who had received training in the area had significantly more positive attitudes than did teachers who had received no training. This finding was also supported by the research of Beh-Pajoo (1992) and Shimman (1990). For practising teachers, longer-term university-based courses were found to be more useful in developing skills and increasing confidence than was school-based training. Courses that developed generic skills, and included significant self-reflection training were more successful than those that concentrated on short-term responses to specific needs (Ljiljana 2000). Research has also found that improvement in teaching and instructional effectiveness is associated with a reduction in the number of suspensions (Joyce et al., 1989), and increased academic engaged time (Konza 1999). Teachers are then encouraged to continue with those instructional practices, if for no other reason than improved classroom management and an increase in teaching and learning time (Joyce et al., 1989).

Thus it would appear that appropriate training and professional development may hold a significant key to the success of inclusion. Training has been found to increase both competence and positive attitudes towards inclusion. What, then, are the indicators of professional learning modules that will facilitate the successful inclusion of students with special educational needs?

Evaluations of staff development in the 1970s that focused on teaching strategies and curriculum revealed that as few as 10% of the participants implemented what they learned (Showers & Joyce 1996). Even those teachers who had voluntarily sought out staff development had low rates of skill transfer from the course to the classroom. To determine just what constitutes the most effective staff development, there needs to be some examination of the broader literature on successful professional learning and school renewal, as changing the perception and success of inclusion requires changing the attitudes and skills of a large system.

### **Responding to the challenge of inclusion**

#### ***Create a nurturing community for teachers***

Most schools include within their vision or mission, a statement relating to the need to provide a safe and nurturing environment for all students. It should also be remembered that teachers need to feel nurtured within the school environment. Because taking on the challenge of students with wide-ranging needs has the inherent risk of failing, of being perceived as incompetent by other teachers, parents and even students, and in some cases even of physical danger (Welsh 1996), schools involved in inclusive programs need to provide an environment that provides teachers with enough physical and emotional security to take those risks. This requires a physical togetherness that separate faculty offices do not offer. It requires communal time that most school timetables do not allow, unless it is factored in as a priority. It requires an understanding that students with special problems are the responsibility of the whole school, and a shared commitment to meeting their needs, so that those teachers with particularly difficult students feel supported in their daily efforts to include those students. Joyce and Calhoun (1995) found that if teachers shared the study of problems as they arose in the school and that if this investigation was embedded in the day-to-day activity of the school, that it contributed greatly to the development of a professional ethos among the teachers, and benefited their collective mental health.

These findings suggest that successful inclusion may begin with changes in how teachers physically and emotionally “come together”. Large common rooms rather than faculty offices would seem to be more appropriate; the timetabling of collaboration time, even if this means less face-to-face teaching time for students; and affirmative action by all staff to support those teachers with the most difficult students – for example, offering to have the students in their class for some periods; making a point of interacting with the most challenging students outside of class time; and taking on responsibility for the students in the playground rather than calling on class or home room teachers to communicate with or even control “their” student. If the classroom teachers feel supported and safe, they are more likely to be physically and emotionally prepared for the challenge of inclusion.

An environment of this kind is more likely to foster exchange of ideas, build networks, and facilitate a community problem-solving mentality (Joyce & Calhoun 1995). It creates the conditions for collective enquiry that is solution-focused rather than problem-focused. A sense of collegial support also reduces the stress that is associated with particularly challenging situations. If attempts at school change are not accompanied by positive social dynamics, and the development of shared understanding, the prospects of successful school change are very limited, and indeed research has found them to be distinctly “discouraging” (Joyce 1991, pg 61).

### ***Link research and practice***

Several researchers have lamented the gap that exists between research findings and school practice. Various reasons have been put forward for this: an underlying teacher cynicism or suspicion of anything that emanates from a university; research findings being published only in journals that teachers never read; or findings being couched in such inaccessible terms that teachers do not understand it.

Positive collegial relationships between school and university faculty rely on each genuinely valuing the contribution and expertise of the other. This is consistent with new models of effective teaching and learning (Gore, 2001; ) and with successful models of school renewal (see below). University staff could collaborate with collection and analysis of data of direct relevance to, and identified by the school to help teacher see the links between research and practice, and to help researchers experience the daily challenges of teaching in the current climate.

### ***Analyse learning environment***

To solve a problem in any context, there must be an understanding of what the central issues are. Joyce and Calhoun (1995) contend that information abounds in school environments, but it is rarely analysed, reflected upon, and used to change practice: in this sense, schools are both information-rich and information-poor. Data collection in relation to student progress is often collected but transfer of information from one teacher to the next does not always occur. Collecting data through student surveys can give vital information about levels of bullying, friendship networks, study and recreation habits, and perceptions of independence and self esteem. These data can deepen understanding of student behaviour and learning.

Data should also be gathered about the various environments within the school – classrooms; playground areas; facilities such as amenities blocks, canteens, etc (Sprick 2005). This is done most effectively if it is implemented in an organised manner, rather than the collection of ad hoc observations from staff busily engaged in teaching or supervisory duties. Sprick argues that this needs to be done comprehensively on an annual basis, with particular emphases on contexts that are proving problematic.

This would be an ideal way in which university researchers and school staff could collaborate for positive school change.

***Increase skill base - stretch teachers' range of instructional tolerance***

There has already been mention in this chapter of the overwhelming research evidence that teachers feel they are under-prepared for teaching learners with widely varying abilities (). How can teachers be better prepared? What types of training or staff development have been most effective?

Stephenson and her colleagues (1999) found that teachers tend to seek advice most often from other teachers and perhaps surprisingly, from parents, particularly in relation to behaviour and students with special needs. While they are likely to receive useful information from those sources, Chandler (2000) asked the question “Why don’t teachers use many of the regional support personnel available to them?” as few teachers have adequate training in the management of challenging behaviours (McMahon & McNamara 2000; Peck et al., 1998; Reichle et al., 1996). If teachers respond ineffectively to challenging behaviour, they may either cause the behaviour to escalate, or allow the behaviour to continue which results in continuing difficulties and eventually more severe consequences. Chandler argues that because of the impact of a student with significant learning or behavioural needs on a classroom, the time and effort teachers must expend on managing them, and the resulting breakdown of communication between teacher and learner (Carr et al., 1991), that teachers are reluctant to be observed (and possibly judged) in the classroom. There is in fact, little documented success of effective consultation between teachers and behavioural consultants (Chandler et al., 1999, Repp 1999).

Teachers may need to learn specific new strategies to address some of the problems. Chandler and her colleagues developed a model of staff development that has had considerable success across a number of different settings and with learners from preschool age to postsecondary (Jolivet et al., 1998, Kern & Dunlap 1999, McGee & Daly 1999 and Repp 1999, all cited in Chandler, 2000; Taylor et al., 1996). The purpose of the staff development was to instruct teachers in *natural functional assessment* as the first step in modifying young learners’ challenging behaviours. It seems appropriate to examine a successful response to challenging behaviour, because it is this that consistently emerges as the most difficult obstacle to inclusion.

Functional assessment requires an analysis of the environmental factors that support problematic behaviours – the contextual factors, the antecedents of the behaviour and the immediate consequences, in order to identify the function of the behaviour, and to answer the questions, “Why is the learner doing that? What’s in it for him?” Based on this analysis, an intervention is planned and implemented to promote a more acceptable alternative for the existing behaviour, and then evaluated. The aim is to

teach individuals more acceptable behaviours that will serve the same purpose as their problem behaviour.

Chandler's model begins with a two-day workshop of small and large group activities that demonstrate, through videos and case studies, how functional assessment is used. If teachers want follow-up assistance with a student in their class, they complete a referral form. Chandler states that teachers are more willing to request assistance after they have seen evidence of the strategy working (in the videos), and seeing the presenters struggle with the same issues they face every day in their classrooms.

After referral, the consultant meets with the school team to define the problem behaviour and discuss the context(s) in which it occurs. Classroom observations then take place, with the classroom teacher and the consultant occasionally swapping the teaching and observation roles. Different strategies may be applied during this period, and observation continues until the cause of the behaviour – which can take from a day to a month – with the teacher and consultant in constant dialogue about what is being observed and why.

Another team meeting follows to discuss the cause of the behaviour, the context, the antecedent events and the consequences. An appropriate alternative behaviour is decided upon, and an intervention plan developed. The consultant demonstrates the intervention for teacher use while the teacher observes; the teacher then takes over while the consultant observes and provides feedback. The intervention plan is revised as necessary. New strategies need to be used with substantial skill and frequency if they are to be maintained. This is much more likely to occur with the continued support of consultants, and in an atmosphere of trust and collegiality.

In-class support is faded as the teacher gains confidence. Strategies to promote maintenance and generalisation are added, and periodic monitoring and follow-up are provided.

The combination of workshops plus in-class consultation and support was more effective than earlier models which included just one or the other, a view supported by the work of Friend and Cook (2000); Reichle et al. (1996); Siegel & Jausovec, (1994); and Malouf and Schiller (1995) and Peterson (1995), cited in Vaughn and Schumm, (1995). This model of intervention has many strengths. It is a model that builds in the expectation of success, as the teachers have seen via the videotapes behaviours that went through a process of positive change. It involves teachers as partners in the whole process and thus increases ownership and commitment by teachers; there is a focus on practical application, demonstration and practice of new skills; there are opportunities for questions, feedback self-reflection and reinforcement; and importantly teachers are not asked to do anything that the consultant does not

do. The result is that teachers are able to manage a behaviour that had been a major problem, which increases their perceptions of competency and self-efficacy.

Additional trickle effects in Chandler's research included the fact that after one teacher had developed these skills, other teachers requested assistance, so the model was effective in reducing resistance to outside consultants being invited into schools.

This model of support could be used to implement change in curriculum implementation, social skill development, leisure and recreation skills behaviour management, and a variety of other areas.

### ***Peer coaching***

If a model of staff development such as Chandler's described in this chapter were to include peer coaching (Showers & Joyce 1996), it may prove to be even more effective in implementing change across a school. What is of particular significance in Showers and Joyce's model is that it quite deliberately omits the feedback session that these models usually incorporate. Weekly seminars or coaching sessions (it could be a two day workshop for several staff as in Chandler's model) focus on the development of the new skills or strategies. Showers and Joyce found in their research that this was a successful model of staff development whether experts or participants conducted the sessions. Teachers then work together to implement the new strategies or techniques. While peers support each other in the planning and implementation of the strategies, the verbal feedback which often occurs after in peer coaching models is eliminated, as Showers and Joyce found that "people slip into supervisory, evaluative comments despite their intentions to avoid them" (pg13), and the collaboration begins to disintegrate. They believe that it is not the feedback that is the "essence" of peer coaching; rather that the learning takes place as teachers plan together, watch one another work with students and discuss the impact on the students' learning or behaviour together. The focus is not on how one teacher implemented a certain plan, and so teachers do not comment on each other's delivery.

In Showers and Joyce's (1996) research, the peer coaching teams wanted to continue their partnerships after the original goals were accomplished, to pursue other educational goals. It was as if the success of one initiative built a momentum that the teams didn't want to lose.

### **Conclusion**

The literature has identified many of the challenges that face the full and successful implementation of inclusion. It has also confirmed that successful inclusive programs exist, but that a range of conditions must be in place. It presents a challenge to government funding bodies to provide the resources that will facilitate inclusion, and it identifies a successful mode of professional development.



A model of initial workshops followed by continued consultation in the school and classroom setting situates the professional learning in its authentic context, working with genuine difficulties, which increases the impact of the training. It allows time for reflection and modification of techniques as required. It is a model that builds collaboration skills, skills that many teachers lack but which are prerequisite for successful inclusion. It is a model that develops the shared understandings and common language that sustains change and reduces the stress of change (Fullan, 2001). It actively develops relevant teacher skills, and it is precisely in this area that teachers feel inadequate in their attempts to include students with disabilities. If this model of professional learning were done in conjunction with researchers active in the field, it would provide opportunities for teachers to reflect on and develop their practice, and critique it against research recommended practice (Long et al., 2003) and so reduce the gap between the professional knowledge of teachers and research findings (Eraclides 2001).

Such a model allows teachers, who are the primary agents of change, to feel that they have support and a network of similarly challenged and thinking colleagues. It builds the commitment of those who are most directly involved. It provides the underlying conditions for sustained change in a system the must undergo fundamental change if the rhetoric surrounding inclusion is to become reality for both learners and teachers; if the educational system is to move towards genuinely meeting the needs of all learners, and fulfil the promise of inclusion.

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